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State Department accused of Moscow security laxness

By Bill Gertz
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A secret Reagan administration report warned two years ago that the U.S. Embassy in Moscow was vulnerable to Soviet espionage but the State Department rejected most of its proposals for tightening security, according to government officials.

Officials, who declined to be named, disclosed some details of the report to highlight what they said were repeated White House efforts to improve lax State Department security procedures at the Moscow embassy over the past three years.

Two Marine security guards once posted at the embassy, Sgt. Clayton J. Lonetree and Cpl. Arnold Bracy, have been charged with espionage in what Marine officials said was a plot last year to allow KGB agents inside the embassy where they gained access to U.S. communications and other secrets.

Another Marine guard, Sgt. Robert S. Stufflebeam, is being held on suspicion of violating rules against socializing with Soviet women while stationed in Moscow.

On Friday, Rep. Les Aspin, Wisconsin Democrat, said "very good sources" had told him two other Marines are suspected of violating rules against fraternizing with Soviet women.

Robert Lamb, the State Department's chief of diplomatic security said last week that "there may very well be others" involved in the embassy security breach.

Administration officials called the case one of the most serious U.S. intelligence losses and said Sgt. Lonetree and Cpl. Bracy were seduced by Soviet women employed at the U.S. embassy in a KGB espionage operation.

The Soviets' use of female agents, called "swallows," against Marines and other U.S. diplomats was pervasive inside the Moscow embassy, one administration official said.

On one occasion, the official said, a group of Marine guards working out on exercise equipment in an embassy recreation room were surprised by a Soviet woman who bared her breasts before the group in an effort to attract suitors.

In a related development, Sen. Patrick J. Leahy, Vermont Democrat, yesterday called the recent KGB penetrations of the Moscow embassy "a major coup for the Soviet Union."

Mr. Leahy, until this year the vice chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, said the State Department in the past resisted congressional efforts to improve the embassy security.

"We've been trying very, very hard to get the State Department to make some changes," Mr. Leahy said on CBS' "Face the Nation."

"The State Department, I don't think, has given enough attention to the intelligence-gathering aspects of a number of our embassies, including Moscow."

Mr. Leahy said the new U.S. embassy building under construction in Moscow was built with the cooperation of a "KGB contractor." The embassy is believed to be riddled with KGB listening devices and the case is currently under investigation by the State Department.

Former U.S. Ambassador Arthur Hartman, appearing on the same program, admitted he opposed administration plans to eliminate Soviet workers employed by the American Embassy in Moscow.

Mr. Hartman said he questioned whether removing the Soviet nationals would "enhance security" since U.S. replacements would be vulnerable to the KGB.

"We're seeing in this Marine case, I fear, what happens when you bring in people who are not motivated to be in Moscow ..." Mr. Hartmann said.

In testimony before a House panel investigating the Marine guards last week, he said the State Department "clearly failed" to keep the embassy secure. But administration officials said Mr. Hartman repeatedly opposed "covert and overt" counterespionage measures at the embassy over the past three years and dismissed security officials' concerns as the "delusions of right-wing officials" and others outside government.

A dispute within the administration over a 1985 report prepared by the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board prompted the protest resignation that spring of one board member, billionaire H. Ross Perot, officials said.

One official said Mr. Perot, a Texas electronics industry executive, had offered to pay for improved embassy security measures out of his own pocket.

The board is made up of private citizens who serve as advisers to the president on foreign intelligence matters.

Another official familiar with the report said only a few of more than a dozen recommendations in the PFIAB report were adopted by the State Department.

"There was long list of recommendations," the official said. "But only a few were implemented."